



## A Sense of Balance

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I am sure that many readers are looking forward to holidays at the end of the year. I understand the appeal of holidays and the feeling of being refreshed and re-energised as a result. The purpose of this column is to challenge you to think about how you can obtain that sense of rejuvenation after you return to work in 2016 – without taking a holiday.

As Nigel Marsh points out in his TED talk on Work-Life Balance, “It is easy to balance work and life when you are not working but that is not a particularly useful skill”. Being able to maintain some sense of balance when business is booming is, however, a valuable skill. It is also a very important skill for both an adviser and their clients, as explained by Tanya Dooney, a trained psychologist who works at Tardis Advice, a financial advice business:

“Balance is near essential for anyone working in the finance industry. Balance enables people to better manage stress and actively improves focus and concentration. The flow on from this is increased productivity, which in turns means being able to provide a better level of support to clients.”

Balance means different things to different people and, at the risk of appearing to judge values, I think that “balance” involves devoting some time to each of the following in any given week (in no particular order):

- Work of some sort, paid or unpaid
- Family of some sort, which may include only a life partner or, alternatively, a large extended family
- Health pursuits of some sort, not necessarily sporting contests
- Community activity, mixing outside your home or workplace
- Spiritual activity, not necessarily church but some type of reflection time (eg yoga)
- Social activity, ranging from catching up with one or two friends to a large party

Everyone will weight these differently but the total exclusion of any one element for any extended period of time may have adverse consequences.

How can one achieve this type of balance when there is so much to do at work? Scott Farmer, Principal of Bravium, believes that it is all about routine and discipline:

“I make sure I spend time with our young kids and that is scheduled into my diary - I pick up the kids from school two days each week. I have an exercise routine early in the morning before work which also works well for me. I treat my routine as not negotiable and I apply the same discipline to it as I do to my work.”



It is also about mindset. Personally, I don't like the term "work-life balance" because it suggests an "either/or" mentality. Larry Fingleson, Managing Director of the Priority Advisory Group, agrees that it is better not to think of the different aspects of our life as separate "buckets". Larry outlines his philosophy:

"There is life and within it you should take all of you to wherever you go. Knowing what is important to you in life and knowing what you want your legacy to be offers the clues to where time and energy should (and will) be spent. Taking our loved ones and those closest to us on our journey helps balance the time allocation challenge we are all faced with."

We can do wonderful things for ourselves if we nourish our whole "self". We can do wonderful things for our clients if our conversations with them encourage them to think about their own life, not just their financial life, in this way.

These are the best of times to commit to a new regime in 2016 that delivers some sense of balance that will benefit you - and your clients.